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Agenda item 10

QUESTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL PERSONS SUBJECTED TO ANY FORM OF DETENTION OR IMPRISONMENT

Written statement submitted by the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[28 January 1991]

INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY OF INTERNATIONAL OFFICIALS

1. Under the auspices of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS), a number of former executive heads of the United Nations system have adopted a statement on the independence and security of international officials.

2. FAFICS has the honour of submitting this statement to the Commission on Human Rights.

Statement by Former Executive Heads

3. We, who have served as executive heads of agencies of the United Nations family, express our grave concern at the continuing assaults against the independence of the international civil service.

4. Today, more than ever, it has become clear that there is no alternative to the United Nations family of organizations for seeking solutions to the problems that arise in every field of human endeavour in an increasingly interdependent world.

5. To carry out its tasks effectively, the United Nations system must have the confidence and respect of its Member States. It can only earn this confidence if the organizations are, and are seen to be, impartial and free from the influence of any one country or group of countries. This means in essence an independent international civil service.

6. It is for this self-evident reason that we have on many occasions stressed the importance of an independent international civil service and the General Assembly has adopted a series of resolutions on the subject. That these principles continue to be violated and executive heads and staff members continue to be subjected to undue influence is disquieting, harmful and deplorable.

7. As we have on occasions been exposed to such undue pressures, we know from personal experience how detrimental they can be to the proper functioning of international organizations and thus to the cause of international co-operation.

8. Pressure is exercised for a variety of purposes but most often in personnel matters, such as imposing or proscribing the appointment of an official. An added threat to independence is the detention and arrest of international officials while performing their duties; in some cases, aggression against the international civil service has gone to the ultimate limit: assassination. We cannot condemn these practices too strongly.

9. None of this detracts from the legitimate interest that Member States have in the proper staffing of international organizations, but in their own best interest, our purpose is to seek respect for the Charter provision enjoining Member States to "respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General" [and all executive heads] "and the staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities". Nothing could be clearer; nothing is more important.

Signed by:

Francis Blanchard, former Director-General, International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Addeke H. Boerma, former Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Poul Hartling, former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Abderrahman Khene, former Director-General, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Halfdan Mahler, former Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO).

Sadruddin Aga Khan, former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).